

Lobster Limited-Entry Zones



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Department of Marine Resources

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Once someone is eligible for a commercial lobster license, they must also see if they can get into the zone they want to fish. There are currently six zones with limited entry (Zones A, B, D, E, F, and G). .

Zones C and E require that apprentices apprentice all their time in those zones in order to become eligible for a commercial license in those zones. You must apprentice in Zone C to obtain a Zone C license; apprentice in Zone E to obtain a Zone E license. Your sponsor(s) must have held a commercial lobster license for **at least** 5 years in order to sponsor you in those zones.

Who can get into a Limited-Entry Zone?

All lobstermen must declare a zone in which they *fish* the majority of their traps and will vote.

If someone wants to declare one of the limited-entry zones, they must either:

Hold a Class I, II or III lobster license the previous year that indicated the limited-entry zone as his/her declared zone; or

1. Hold a Class I under age 18 license; or
2. Hold a Class I, II or III lobster license and is over age 70; or
3. Be eligible for a Class I, II or III lobster license under a medical or military appeal and was previously in that zone; or
4. Be authorized by the Commissioner as a “New Zone Entrant” off a waiting list.

How do I become authorized as a “new zone entrant”?

The Department has a waiting list for each limited-entry zone in chronological order according to their eligibility date. The list includes both transfers (i.e., fishermen from other zones who want to switch zones) and new zone entrants.

A person can ask to be on the waiting list for up to two limited-entry zones. That person will be taken off the waiting list for the 2nd zone when the person is authorized and declares one of the zones.

A person who does not currently hold a Class I, II or III license but has become eligible for a license:

- Will be put on the waiting list according to their eligibility date as they become eligible.
- Must fill out a Declared Zone Form to indicate what zone(s) that person wishes to declare as their declared zone within 30 days of notification of eligibility. The forms must be returned within 30 days of receipt in order to be placed on the waiting list according to his/her original eligibility date. A person who does not return the form within 30 days will be placed on the waiting list according to the date the form was received providing it is received within that year.
- Can purchase a commercial lobster license in an open zone or renew their apprentice and/or student license for the current year in any zone (if they are eligible).

A person who currently holds a Class I, II or III license and wants to transfer to a “limited-entry zone”:

- Must fill out a Declared Zone Form and request to be on a waiting list before December 15. The date the Commissioner receives the written request is the date that person will be put on the waiting list.

How is the number of new zone entrants calculated?

By February 1 of each year, the Department will calculate the number of licenses to be awarded to new entrants for each limited-entry zone for that calendar year. The number of licenses is based on an exit ratio of the number of new zone entrants and the number of licenses not renewed in that zone in the previous calendar year. The exit ratios for the limited-entry lobster zones are as follows:

- Zone A- 1 new zone entrant for every 3 licenses not renewed (1:3);
- Zone B- 1 new zone entrant for every 3 licenses not renewed (1:3);
- Zone D- 1 new zone entrant for every 5 license not renewed (1:5);
- Zone E- 1 new zone entrant for every 5 licenses not renewed (1:5);
- Zone F- 1 new zone entrant for every 5 licenses not renewed (1:5);
- Zone G- 1 new zone entrant for every 5 licenses not renewed (1:5).

How are new licenses awarded for a limited-entry zone?

Once the number of new zone entrants to be awarded a license for a limited-entry zone has been calculated for each limited-entry zone, a list of authorized new zone entrants is determined from the waiting list:

- a) Authorized new zone entrants will be informed in writing and mailed a license application form *by certified mail*.
- b) Authorized new zone entrants must submit their license application, correctly filled out for the same zone as their declared zone form, with correct fees and documentation to the Department. The Department must receive the application within 30 days of receipt of notice or the new zone entrant will lose their authorization to qualify for a limited-entry zone.
- c) If an authorized new zone entrant has not complied with above, the next person on the waiting list for the limited-entry zone, if any, will be sent a license application and have 30 days to comply in the same manner.

What if the person does not return the application within 30 days?

People who have not correctly completed their license application and returned it to the Department within the 30-day time frame allowed by law will lose their eligibility date but will remain eligible to get back on the waiting list. Their new eligibility date will be the date the Department receives a request in writing to be on the waiting list for a limited-entry zone.

- The Department will notify the person that they have missed their opportunity to purchase a license.
- To get back on the waiting list, the Department will need a letter of intent.
- If the Department does not receive a letter of intent by the end of the current license year (December 31st), the person will lose their eligibility for a Class I lobster license and will need to enter the apprentice program to become eligible again.

What happens if there are more licenses available than the number of people on the waiting list?

The number of slots that are available for the year will remain available for the entire licensing year to new entrants and transfers as they become eligible for a license.

- The Department will issue licenses until the end of the licensing year for each limited-entry zone up to the total number of new zone entrants authorized for that zone.

- The Department will notify individuals as they approach their eligibility date that a slot is available.

Who is eligible for a Commercial Lobster and Crab harvesting license?

A person who either:

1. Has held a Class I, II or III lobster license in the previous calendar year; or
2. Meets the requirements of the Apprentice Program (200 logged days and 1000 hours over a minimum of 2 years); or

Lobster License Appeals

A person can be granted a license under appeal if the person can document to the Commissioner:

- Substantial illness within one year of last license. Or
- Service in the United States Armed Forces or the United States Coast Guard; or
- Did not possess a Class I, II or III after September 18, 1999 because of license suspension. (Suspended Class I, II and III lobster license holders do not automatically have their license eligibility reinstated; they must request an appeal for reinstatement.) You must have held a license in the year they were suspended in order to have it reinstated.

This brochure is a summary only.

Please refer specific questions to:
License Eligibility Specialist

Department of Marine Resources,

21 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0021; 624-6549.